

Arts &

The Daily Herald

Pleasant Grove s

By LAURIE WILLIAMS SOWBY
Special to The Daily Herald

Robert K. Oscarson was an award-winning artist in high school. He represented Pleasant Grove High as its art Sterling Scholar, had a piece of his sculpture accepted for the Springville Museum of Art's annual show, and won an art scholarship to Dixie College.

But life intervened and his art was set aside. At the age of 49, Oscarson's just getting back into sculpting fulltime. And he thinks he's doing a better job of it now than he would have 30 years ago.

Some of the intensity of his feeling is evident in his latest creation, thus far still a clay model of two boys engaging in the old pioneer game of stick pulling. A hat and pair of shoes are cast aside as the boys wrestle, their hands holding tightly to the handle of a hoe. Oscarson plans to cast a limited edition of 100 in honor of Utah's statehood centennial.

But the piece, *Holdin' On*, is also in honor of his parents, Robert A. and Betty Burningham Oscarson, who still live in the hundred-year-old adobe house in Pleasant Grove built by the artist's grandfather Gustav, who immigrated from Sweden. The farm life experienced by the artist and his eight brothers and sisters is also honored in the sculpture, along with the values of hard work and service to others, said Oscarson.

"The sculpture is filled with tiny, significant things," he explained.

"The grubbing hoe was used by my father and my grandfather. The shoes and hat resting nearby give the message, 'Time out for a little fun.'"

Sculpture itself has brought some fun back into the artist's life.

pushed him to go back to sculpting.

"There was a time in my life when holdin' on was very meaningful," he said, and his new sculpture therefore signifies tenacity and victory and family ties as well as a break from the routine.

He started the piece in late December, after mulling over the idea for months in his mind. He's still refining some of the details as he prepares to have it cast at Adonis Bronze in Orem before its entrance in the Springville Museum of Art's prestigious Spring Salon. He estimates he's put more than 250 hours into it thus far.

"I want to encourage, uplift and build people."

—Bob Oscarson

His son helped him build the armature (wire frame). "and once I started working on it, it became an obsession," he said. Friends' children became models for elbows, feet and other parts as he worked on them.

Oscarson says it's inspiring to get the idea for a sculpture, but he's always "humbled by what happens" as it takes shape. In *Holdin' On*, "Reaching toward my roots, having that centennial fever — all these things came together," he said.

Just as his centennial piece celebrates solid values, so do other sculptures Oscarson has done. He really re-entered the art world five years ago at the behest of Howard Ruff, who had him sculpt a bust of his 11-year-old daughter.

His friend and partner Glen Overton then had him do a bust of his son when he attained Eagle rank in Scouting. Now that bust, titled *On My Honor*, is offered by the Boy Scouts of America as a gift for large donors, and two other gifts — a silver beaver called *Eager to Serve* and *We Salute You* a hand in Scout salute with an eagle serving as the thumb — are also offered as official special

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ourtyard Marriott in Salt Lake
ity, the Thunderbird Motel in St.
eorge, and a new Magleby's
restaurant in Salt Lake City. Diffi-
ult years that included divorce
nd a return to school in the late
980s also lent some intensity to
Oscarson's present works, and his
wo youngest children —
ameron, 16, and Sarah, 18, who
are talented artists themselves —

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Scouts.

Three other bronze sculptures
by Oscarson appear in the land-
scape of the Vic Hammond home
in Pleasant Grove — a little boy
pulling a wagon, a little girl with
an ice cream cone, and a jack rab-
bit about to run. Created last year,
they're part of his new perspective
of life.

"I want to encourage, uplift and
build people," Oscarson says.
"Sculpting — I love it. Art's
become very important in my life.
My art is how I really feel about
things."

Entertainment D₁

Thursday, February 22, 1996

sculptor creates centennial piece



Daily Herald Photo/Matthew R. Smith

Bob Oscarson works on the clay model of "Holdin' On" at his Pleasant Grove home on Tuesday afternoon. Oscarson, who recently returned to sculpting, created "Holdin' On" in honor of the Utah centennial and in honor of his parents, Robert and Betty Oscarson.



Dancers perform at BYU today

Brigham Young University's Dancers' Company, the university's top modern dance ensemble, will be presenting "Dance in Concert" today through Saturday at 7:30 p.m. in the...



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Photo courtesy of Bob Oscarson

Bob Oscarson plans to cast a limited edition of 100 copies of his sculpture "Holdin' On" in honor of

Utah's statehood centennial. He estimates that he has put over 250 hours into its creation.

Dancers perform at BYU today

Brigham Young University's Dancers' Company, the university's top modern dance ensemble, will be presenting "Dance in Concert" today through Saturday at 7:30 p.m. in the de Jong Concert Hall.

Tickets are available at BYU's Fine Arts Ticket Office, 378-4322. Prices are \$7 for the general public and \$6 for students.

The performance will celebrate Utah's centennial as well as modern dance pioneer Doris Humphrey's 100th birthday.

Program pieces include *Woman the Pioneer*, a suite of six dances that was commissioned for the Seattle World's Fair in 1962. "This notation is espe-